

In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) An amplifier, comprising:

an output node;

an input stage amplifier coupled to the ~~an~~ output node;

an output stage comprising at least two switching elements ~~and~~ coupled to the output node; and

a control circuit coupled to the output stage, the control circuit operable to produce a tri-state output from ~~of~~ the output stage to the output node in response to a sensed value proportional to an amount of current that flows to the output node from the input stage amplifier.

2. (previously presented) The amplifier of claim 1, wherein the amplifier comprises an audio amplifier.

3. (previously presented) The amplifier of claim 1, wherein the input stage amplifier comprises a class AB amplifier.

4. (previously presented) The amplifier of claim 1, further comprising a threshold circuit operable to measure the current and to generate the sensed value.

5. (previously presented) The amplifier of claim 1, wherein the control circuit comprises:

a first portion operable to control the output stage when the current flows from the input stage to the output node; and

a second portion operable to control the output stage when the current flows from the output node to the input stage.

6. (previously presented) The amplifier of claim 1, wherein the control circuit is further operable to:

activate a first switching element of the output stage until the current reaches a second threshold after exceeding a first threshold;

activate a second switching element of the output stage until the current reaches a fourth threshold after exceeding a third threshold; and

deactivate the first switching element until the current exceeds the first threshold and deactivating the second switching element until the current exceeds the third threshold.

7-12 (canceled)

13. (currently amended) A method for improving amplifier efficiency, comprising the steps of:

providing an input stage amplifier an output stage and an output load coupled to the output stage, the output stage comprising at least two switching elements;

measuring a sensed value proportional to a current flowing from the an input stage amplifier to the an output load ~~coupled to an output stage of an amplifier, the output stage comprising at least two switching elements;~~ and

producing a tri-state output of the output stage of the amplifier using a control circuit ~~in response~~ responsive to the sensed value.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the sensed value comprises a voltage.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the input stage comprises a class AB input stage.

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the control circuit comprises at least one comparator responsive to the sensed value and operable to control at least a first switching element of the output stage.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein producing a tri-state output comprises:

activating a first switching element of the output stage until the current reaches a second threshold after exceeding a first threshold;

activating a second switching element of the output stage until the current reaches a fourth threshold after exceeding a third threshold; and

deactivating the first switching element until the current exceeds the first threshold and deactivating the second switching element until the current exceeds the third threshold.

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the second threshold is the same as the fourth threshold.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein each of the thresholds comprise a voltage proportional to the sensed value.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the first switching element is activated and deactivated by at least one comparator circuit, and the second switching element is activated and deactivated by at least one additional comparator circuit.